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151113Z Sep 04

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002326

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DUTCH DEFENSE MINISTER PREVIEWS SEPTEMBER 16-17 EU INFORMAL DEFENSE MINISTERIAL

¶1. Summary: In a September 9 letter to the Dutch parliament, Defense Minister Kamp previewed the September 16-17 EU Defense Ministers Informal Ministerial at Noordwijk, Netherlands. This meeting will be preceded by the first meeting of the Steering Board of the new European Defense Agency under the chairmanship of HC Solana. The main items on the agenda are preparing for the Military Capabilities Conference in November, the planned transition from the end of SFOR to EU-led Operation Althea in Bosnia, and possible ESDP contributions to the fight against terrorism. Kamp stressed the need to coordinate EU and NATO initiatives to strengthen capabilities so that they are complementary and reinforce each other. End summary.

¶2. Dutch Defense Minister Henk Kamp previewed the agenda for the September 16-17 EU Informal Defense Ministerial meeting in Noordwijk, Netherlands in a September 9 letter to the Dutch parliament. In his letter, Kamp noted that the Dutch Presidency aims to set up decisions for the next GAERC and for the Military Capabilities Conference in November. Key points of the letter dealt with Bosnia-Herzegovina, strengthening EU military capabilities, EU Battlegroups, Global Deployability Approach, European Gendarmerie Force, European Defense Agency, and Presidency Priorities, and are summarized below.

¶3. Begin text of Embassy summary/translation of key points of Kamp's September 9 letter to parliament:

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The Presidency will brief the ministers on progress that has been made with operation Althea. It will be checked whether the military EU HQ in Sarajevo will be ready in early October, as planned. That is necessary to secure a smooth transition from SFOR to the new EU mission. The actual transfer of command is planned for mid-December. As soon as decisionmaking on offering Dutch units is under discussion, parliament will be informed accordingly.

Strengthening Military Capabilities

The Presidency will seek to achieve consensus on the agreements that should be made at the Military Capabilities Conference in November. Those include:

-- Tackling the remaining military deficiencies of the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal. Using the evaluation of the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP,) the remaining military deficiencies should be identified, and if necessary, the ECAP should be revised to deal with them. Thus, a clear point of departure is created for the new EU Headline Goal 2010.

-- Commitment to qualitative targets in Headline Goal 2010, and consensus on the military elaboration, as well as the development of standards and criteria to measure quality improvement.

-- Registration of military units for initial operational capability of EU Battlegroups in the period 2005-2007, and if possible, registration of such units for the fully operational battle group capability as of 2007. Although the Dutch mandate is restricted to the initial operational capability, the Presidency intends to provide clarity about the complete battle group capability. That is necessary in order to be able to make timely preparations.

-- Intensification of international military cooperation. The Netherlands organizes in this context a conference on October 11-12 that should yield conclusions and recommendations.

The luncheon on September 17 will be used to discuss a possible ESDP contribution to the combat against terrorism. Although the emphasis of the EU combat against terrorism is on police and legal cooperation, and NATO has the lead in the military combat of terrorism, supplementary options via ESDP are imaginable, for instance in the area of consequence management. The debate also intends to give an impulse to

ESDP activities in the area of combating terrorism.

EU Battlegroups

As for the EU Battlegroups, there should be no misunderstanding over the high demands that are made to such military units. The EU has no need for paper tigers. Ample attention will therefore be paid at the meeting to the concrete EU requirement for coherent and effective military formations - including logistical support and strategic transport. The modalities of multinational Battlegroups will also be discussed because many member states, including the Netherlands, will offer such a military formation together with others and not on their own. Finally, the Netherlands has asked the member states whether they were planning to contribute with (part of) a EU battle group to the initial operational capability (2005-2007) and, if possible, to the full operational capability (as of 2007). In the latter case it will be an indication and not a commitment of a specific unit. Thus, the Presidency hopes to create conditions so that concrete offers can be expected during the Military Capabilities Conference in November.

Global Deployability Approach

The initiative of rapid reaction EU Battlegroups focuses attention on the importance of strategic transport in relation to rapid deployment. The Global Deployability Approach, a French initiative, offers the opportunity to combine existing initiatives and mechanisms that aim to coordinate strategic means of transport, such as the European Airlift Cell at Eindhoven. That should make it possible to provide for transport capabilities for the EU Battlegroups as of 2007 and could help to improve the efficient deployment of means of transport. The Presidency aims to achieve agreement at Noordwijk on an action plan.

European Gendarmerie Force (EGF)

The EU Defense Ministers will be informed on the state of affairs with respect to the establishment of a European Gendarmerie Force. This robust military police force, in which France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain will participate, should be deployable at short notice during or immediately after a military action. This initiative was taken in 2003.

European Defense Agency (EDA)

This agency is to become operational under the Dutch Presidency. This requires a number of practical matters, such as hiring personnel, as well as drafting an initial work plan for 2005. Prior to the informal ministerial, HC Solana will chair the initial meeting of the agency's steering board.

Presidency Priorities

Kamp's letter stressed that the Dutch Presidency will pay particular attention to the ECAP evaluation and the development of standards and criteria. ECAP evaluation is in line with the Dutch view that it should be made clear how the remaining military deficiencies from the Helsinki Headline Goal are tackled. The development of EU Battlegroups will give an important impulse to rapid deployability of European military capabilities. The Netherlands is of the opinion, however, that the improvement in quality of European military capabilities should be measurable.

The Netherlands will also emphasize the need to coordinate the EU and NATO initiatives to strengthen capabilities so that they are complementary and reinforce each other. Especially use of the EU NATO Capability Group is important in this context. Thus, ESDP can contribute to improved achievements of European nations in NATO. In this context, good coordination between the activities of the European Defense Agency and NATO is also important.

Finally, the Netherlands seeks to promote international military cooperation, which is an important instrument to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of European military capabilities. It does so not just at the cited conference but also through the EU Battlegroups initiative that provides new opportunities for cooperation among European armed forces. In this context, the Netherlands is currently investigating the options of cooperation with the UK and Germany.

End text of summary/translation.

Sobel